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This proceedings is a result of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference for Nubian Studies held in the British Museum in London. This collection of papers includes contributions from archaeologists and scholars who address a variety of topics pertaining to the region of Sudan and southern Egypt designated as Nubia. The volume has an Introduction which records the opening speeches of the conference and a discussion of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvation Project (MDASP). The Introduction is followed by the three main sections: 'Main Papers', 'Reports and Research Papers', and 'Language and Linguistics'. This review summarises the general content and highlights some of the analytical papers that reflect and/or challenge discursive tendencies in Nubian studies.

The 'Main Papers' section is divided chronologically into five sub-sections: Prehistory, The Kerma Period, the Kushite Period, The Mediaeval Period, and The Islamic Period. The papers in the 'Prehistory' sub-section (pp. 9-52) discuss recent discoveries related to this part of Nubian history. Piotr Osypiński (pp. 9-18) covers the Fourth cataract region. Matthieu Honegger (pp. 19-30) discusses Northern Sudan. Maria Gatto (pp. 45-52) discusses Lower Nubia, Upper Egypt, and the desert regions.

The Kerma Period consists of four essays. Henryk Paner (pp. 53-80) discusses the presence of Kerma culture in the Fourth Cataract region. Charles Bonnet (pp. 81-94) discusses the growth of knowledge on Kerma cultures. Brigitte Gratien (pp. 95-102) covers Kerma culture in the region north of the Third Cataract. Dominique Valbelle (pp.

103-110) gives an overview of international relations between Kerma and Ancient Egypt.

The Kushite Period has three essays. Salah Mohamed Ahmed (pp. 111-18) gives an overview of the Kushite presence in the Fourth Cataract region. Vincent Rondot (pp. 119-24) discusses the archaeological activities at Meroe Island. Angelika Lohwasser (pp. 125-34) discusses Kushite relations beyond the Nile Valley, particularly in the Kushite border regions.

The Mediaeval Period consists of essays that give overviews of different aspects of the period. Bogdan Żurawski (pp. 135-54) discusses the history of the Fourth Cataract during the Mediaeval Period using the archaeological data. Włodzimierz Godlewski (pp. 155-70) reconstructs the history of the kingdom of Makuria using various range of sources. David Edwards (pp. 171-82) discusses Mediaeval Nobadia and the growing research on the kingdom. Derek Welsby (pp. 183-99) discusses the current state of knowledge on the Kingdom of Alwa.

The Islamic Period has four essays. Abdelrahman Ali Mohammed (pp. 201-08) covers the Fourth Cataract region. Intisar Soghayroun Elzein (pp. 209-16) discusses Islamic archaeology in Northern Sudan. Michael Mallinson (pp. 217-226) discusses the Red Sea Littoral. Yusuf Fadl Hasan (pp. 227-34) discusses Islamic Sudan's external contacts.

The 'Reports and Research Papers' section is divided chronologically into seven sub-sections: Prehistory, Kerma and contemporary cultures, Pharaonic, Kushite, Mediaeval, Islamic to Modern, and a Multi-period sub-section. The prehistory sub-section includes archaeological reports. Elena A. A. Garcea (pp. 235-42) gives an update on excavations at Sai Island. There are updates on the El-Salha Project at El-Khiday in Central Sudan which include a preliminary study of the site overall by Sandro Salvatori et al (pp. 243-57), a geoarchaeological study (pp. 259-70) by Andrea Zerboni, and a bioarchaeological analysis (pp. 271-77) by Tina Jakob. Abdel M. Khabir (pp. 279-84) provides a study of

pottery from Neolithic sites, Islang 2 and Nofalab 2, in the Khartoum province. Azhari Mustafa Sadig (pp. 285-92) looks at child burials in Late Neolithic site of es-Sour. Moreover, there are reports on Nabta Playa. Przemek Bobrowski et al. discusses the excavations of the Neolithic tumuli (pp. 293-301) and Heba-Tallah A. A. Ibrahim discusses (pp. 303-09) the megalithic architecture at Nabta Playa.

The content in 'Kerma and the contemporary cultures' (pp. 311-66) consists of archaeological reports and discussions that focus on social and cultural developments. For example, Emberling et al. (pp. 329-36) discuss ceramic traditions at the Kerma culture cemetery at el-Widay I which is a peripheral area within the kingdom of Kush. They argue that the mixture of ceramics shows no coherent indigenous culture in the fourth cataract region between the Neolithic and Kerma period. However, this approach overlooks the possibility of physical hybridity and fluidity in cultural expression.

The content in the 'Pharaonic' sub-section (pp. 367-530) includes fieldwork reports and discussions of Nubian identity. There are three papers that both reflect and critique general views in Nubian studies regarding group identity. Stuart Tyson Smith and Michele R. Buzon (pp. 431-42), critique the notion of 'Egyptianisation' in favour of 'cultural entanglement' as an explanation of Kushite identity during colonisation. Smith and Buzon show the shortcomings of Egyptianisation, but their analysis assumes an exact correlation between material record and identity in a colonial setting. This approach oversimplifies social relations and the implications of structural power dynamics on those relations.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the common African context of ancient Egypt and Kush is overlooked. Further, they somewhat retain the concept of Egyptianisation, rather than dismantling it altogether.

Natalie A. Pomerantseva (pp. 451-56) demonstrates that Ancient Egyptian visual depictions of Nubians were both canonical and non-canonical. She presupposes that there was a Black/non-Black dichotomisation of Nubia and Ancient Egypt, a common assumption in Nubian studies and Egyptology, which is problematic. To the contrary,

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this issue see Epperson 2004, Fanon 1967

both peoples are depicted in the same range of black and brown complexions and diversity of phenotypes as contemporary Black people.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Ancient Egyptians were just as Black as their Nubian neighbours. Danièle Michaux-Colombot (pp. 507-22) questions the Nubians/Nubia translation. Her 'true' (or real) Nubians distinction is not substantively explained. However, she convincingly demonstrates that it is best to transliterate ethnicons in light of the multi-ethnic background of the ancient Middle Nile Valley.

The discussions in the 'Kushite' sub-section (pp. 531-832) include archaeological reports, analysis of royal symbolism, cultural practices and external contacts in the context of Napatan-Meroitic period. Some discussions show new perspectives to old problems. For example, El-Samani Al-Nasir Mohammed Ahmed (pp. 531-36) suggests that Napatans were a royal family from the Kerma period who returned from their refuge in the New Kingdom which, in turn, explain the archaeological gap between the New Kingdom and the emergence of Napatan Kush. Another example, Jean Revez (pp. 537-44) suggests that the title 'King's Brother' used by the Napatan rulers was a royal title more so than a biological marker much like the title of 'King's Son(s)' which occurred in the thirteenth dynasty and sporadically in other periods in Ancient Egypt. This argument is strong, but could be further enhanced by situating Kush and Ancient Egypt in their African context because this use of kinship terms is a common aspect in African cultures.<sup>3</sup>

The content in the 'Mediaeval' section (pp. 833-1004) includes archaeological reports, epigraphic studies, and discussions of Christianity in Nubia. The 'Islamic to Modern' content (pp. 1005-48) consists of archaeological reports and notes, surveys of museum collections, tourism discussions, and discussions of iconography.

The content in the 'Multi-Period' section (pp. 1049-1168) includes archaeological reports and discussions of social development. For example, Ross Thomas (pp. 1091-98)

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion see Ashton 2011, Carruthers 1992, Grantham 2003, Martin 1984

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion see Allen 2009: 34-55

correlates ceramic use and food consumption to identity display at the Fourth Cataract. However, ethnic identity is too complex to be limited to material consumption. The regional differences that Thomas observes could simply reflect social relations, e.g. external contacts, as opposed to actual group identity. It is important to understand race and ethnicity as dialectical social processes.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the archaeological record can give insight on daily consumption, but it may not correlate to racial or ethnic identity.

The 'Language and Linguistics' section has two essays that provide complementary perspectives. Claude Rilly (pp. 1169-88) uses historical linguistics approach, alongside archaeology and physical anthropology to address issues of ethnicity in the Middle Nile Valley from the second millennium BC to the early Middle Ages. Rilly suggests that Pre-Nubian influence on Old Nubian occurred prior to the settlement of the Noubades in Nubia and that its speakers assimilated into one of the early Nubian groups, but the linguistic situation with the C-group peoples remains unclear. Herman Bell (pp. 1189-94) gives an interesting discussion on linguistic continuity, or perhaps revival, between ancient and modern Sudanese culture. Bell, using three language games as a test, argues that a streamlined and simplified Old Nubian alphabet can help revitalise modern Nubian languages and cultures. Both papers highlight the critical role of language in cultural and historical development.

There are three issues in Nubian studies reflected in the collection, particularly in regards to Nubian antiquity. First, scholarship must go beyond the reductionist framing of Nubian engagement with ancient Egyptian culture in an adoption/rejection binary in favour of more nuanced approaches that address *both* their differences and fundamental Africanity.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, scholars have to engage anti-colonial scholarship and critical race theory when discussing ancient Nubian identity in the colonial period.<sup>6</sup> Third, the viability of the material record as a basis for determining identity has to be critically reassessed using the aforementioned scholarship. Despite the aforementioned

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<sup>4</sup> For further discussion see López 2000, Rees 2007, Treitler 2013

<sup>5</sup> For example of such an approach see Faraji 2012

<sup>6</sup> For introductory material, see Césaire 1972, Delgado and Stefancic 2012, Haley 2009, Fanon 1967

problems, this volume boasts engaging and insightful analysis which shows the growth of Nubian studies.

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